

## 10/19/2009 This Week in Congress

This Week in Congress

October 19, 2009

Dear Friend,

Welcome to "This Week in Congress."

### Homebuyer Tax Credit Should Not Expire

This week, I spoke to the House of Representatives about the importance of renewing the \$8,000 first-time homebuyer tax credit. The tax credit for first-time home buyers, which was created in 2008, has strengthened the struggling housing market but is set to expire November 30. I have introduced H.R. 2905, the Homebuyer Tax Credit Expansion Act of 2009, to extend the credit beyond its November 30 expiration. In addition, this legislation would expand the tax credit to all buyers, not just first-time home buyers. It is important Congress take action soon so this tax credit does not expire. [Click here to watch my speech.](#)

### Introducing Legislation to Support Rural Hospitals

I introduced H.R. 3806, the Enhanced Rural Health Care Extension Act of 2009, which would extend funding for the Rural Community Hospital Program and allow Kansas hospitals to be considered for participation. The program, which is set to expire this November, helps small rural hospitals by providing them with enhanced Medicare reimbursements for inpatient services and other assistance. The ten least sparsely populated states in the U.S. were originally authorized for participation in the program. Kansas was excluded from participation because it ranks 11th in population density. Several Kansas hospitals appear to meet all the necessary criteria to be considered for participation and this bill would allow them that opportunity. [Click here to read more about this legislation.](#)

#### House Begins to Address Iranian Nuclear Threat

Iran becomes more dangerous each day, as it continues to amass enriched uranium that can be used to build nuclear weapons. On Wednesday, I supported passage of the Iran Sanctions Enabling Act, which allows state and local governments to divest the assets of their pension funds and any other funds under their control from companies investing \$20 million or more in Iran's energy sector. Passage of this legislation is an important step to address the Iranian nuclear threat but more must be done to prevent Iran from acquiring the means to do the hateful things its leaders speak of. [Click here to read my remarks in support of this legislation and additional measures to pressure Iran to abandon its pursuit of nuclear weapons.](#)

#### Department of Veterans Affairs Update from VA Secretary Shinseki

On Wednesday, I attended a hearing of the House Committee on Veterans' Affairs to get an update on the state of the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) from Secretary Eric Shinseki. During the hearing, the Secretary discussed the need for veteran patient safety, the backlog in processing benefit claims and efforts to implement the Post 9/11 GI Bill. I questioned the Secretary on the VA's plan to expand the enrollment of Priority Group 8 veterans in the VA health care system. In 2003, the VA stopped enrollment of Priority Group 8 veterans (those without service-connected disabilities who do not meet certain income thresholds) but has recently begun enrollment of these veterans and has set a goal of

enrolling 500,000 additional veterans within the next four years. I believe it is important to provide medical care for all veterans.

## Worldwide Hunger Reaches Unfortunate Milestone

A report issued this week by the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization found that for the first time ever, more than 1 billion people around the world are hungry-many of them children. The report's release came just before World Food Day on Friday, during which people took notice of the widespread prevalence of hunger around the world and in their own communities. As co-chair of the House Hunger Caucus, I am committed to reducing hunger. Recently, I requested a meeting with USDA Secretary Tom Vilsack to discuss USDA's plans to address hunger in our country and the Administration's plans to implement the President's goal of ending child hunger by 2015.

## Attending the Kansas Association of Broadcasters Convention in Topeka

On Sunday night, I attended the annual Kansas Association of Broadcasters (KAB) Convention in Topeka. Formed in 1951, the KAB was created to promote and protect the interests of Kansas broadcasters. It is always an honor to spend time around Kansas news professionals who are committed to reporting and broadcasting local news, weather and sports.

Congratulations to the award winners and hall of fame inductees this year. John Wright of Wichita with the KFDI/KFTI news team received the 2009 Sonny Slater Award. General Manager for KTPK FM, Jim Allan of Topeka, won the 2009 Mike Oatman Award. This year's hall of fame inductees included: Greg Gamer of Wichita; Jack Hartle of Great Bend; and Eagle Communications President and CEO, Gary Shorman of Hays. Gary was also the recipient of the 2009 KAB Distinguished Service Award. This award is presented annually to recognize exemplary service to one's community, state and the broadcast industry.

I appreciate KAB President Kent Cornish for inviting me to be a part of this special night and helping recognize my neighbor and friend, Gary Shorman.

#### Speaking at Kansas Chiropractic Fall Convention in Overland Park

I spoke at the Kansas Chiropractic Association Fall Convention on Saturday. As we consider ways to reform our current health care system, it is important that we reduce the overall cost of health care. One way we can reduce costs is to place as much emphasis on wellness and disease prevention as we do on illness. During the convention, I discussed how chiropractic care and other disease prevention and wellness initiatives are important strategies for reducing and controlling health care costs. As health care legislation is debated in Congress, I will work to see that patients have access to chiropractic services. Through my position on the House Veterans' Affairs (VA) Committee, I have helped enact legislation that provides chiropractic care to our veterans. Thank you to Dr. Kevin Davidson for inviting me to speak and to Kansas Chiropractic Association Executive Director John Kiefhaber.

#### Speaking to Miami County Farm Bureau Annual Meeting

I was in Paola this week to speak with members of the Miami County Farm Bureau at their annual meeting. As a senior member of the House Committee of Agriculture, it is important that I create a better awareness and understanding in Congress of the challenges farmers experience on a daily basis. Protecting and preserving farms and ranches is vital for the survival of our state's economy and our Kansas way of life. I talked about my recent opposition to Cap and Trade legislation as it will drastically raise energy prices for American families and businesses. I also discussed health care reform, the National Bio and Agro-Defense Facility (NBAF) and irresponsible government spending.

I appreciated the hospitality of the group. Thank you to President Michael Martin and Marge Pretz for inviting me to speak.

#### Learning about Pharmaceutical Research at CritiTech in Lawrence

On Friday, I visited CritiTech, Inc. in Lawrence to learn about the research and development work this company does and its applications for better treating diseases. CritiTech is a spin-off company from the research done by professors at the University of Kansas. Its drug Nanotax, which treats ovarian cancer, is currently in phase 1 clinical trials. CritiTech's work strengthens the University of Kansas Medical Center's application for designation as a National Cancer Institute Cancer Center. It is also an example of the promise bioscience enterprises hold for our state. Thanks to Sam Campbell, CritiTech President and Chairman, for his hospitality.

#### Meeting with Business Leaders in Kansas City

I attended the Kansas City Kansas (KCK) Chamber of Commerce's Congressional Forum on Friday in Kansas City where State Treasurer Dennis McKinney was the featured speaker. This monthly luncheon provides area business leaders an opportunity to share information with elected officials. During the event, I learned more about efforts to attract health care technology company Cerner Corp., and the Kansas City Wizards soccer team to Wyandotte County. If the proposal is successful, Cerner would bring about 4,500 jobs to Kansas and the Wizards would build an 18,500-seat soccer stadium. Both would be located near the Kansas Speedway off I-435 and I-70. This economic development project has the opportunity to boost the Kansas economy. Thank you to Dr. Tom Burke, Chairman of the Board; Cindy Cash, Chamber President and CEO; and all of the members of the KCK Chamber Executive Committee.

## Deadline Approaching for U.S. Service Academy Applications

I am still accepting applications from young men and women interested in seeking nominations to the U.S. Air Force Academy in Colorado Springs, Colorado; the U.S. Naval Academy in Annapolis, Maryland; the U.S. Military Academy in West Point, New York; and the U.S. Merchant Marine Academy in Kings Point, New York. Those selected will enter the academies in June 2010.

If nominated, applicants must then meet the individual admission requirements of each academy. The academies will make the final decision on who receives an appointment of admission. Due to limited placement, I encourage all interested candidates to also apply to the offices of U.S. Senators Sam Brownback and Pat Roberts.

The application deadline is November 1, 2009. Interested applicants should visit my Web site or contact my Hutchinson office for more information.

## In the Office

Eric Haar of Topeka was in with the Federal Home Loan Bank to discuss financial services reform legislation. Colin Hansen of McPherson and Merl Page of Wamego were in with Kansas Municipal Utilities to talk about climate change legislation. Judy and Nelson Kruger of Lawrence stopped by my office to visit.

Several Kansans visited my Washington, D.C., office to receive a tour of the United States Capitol, including Colleen Anderson and Pat Schneider of Council Grove; Galen, Tena and Celeste Brucken of Soldier; Terry and Valorie Zimmer of Salina; Molly Wieland and Kate Hagman of Garden City; Elizabeth Hagman of Smith Center; Rebecca Crotty of Topeka; Bev Polowniak of Olathe; Chris and Nikki Walker of Wichita; and Audie and Jeanne Strotkamp of Peabody.

Very truly yours,

Jerry